



National Weather Service

Storm Data and Unusual Weather Phenomena



January 2002

Location	Date	Time Local/ Standard	Path Length (Miles)	Path Width (Yards)	Number of Persons Killed	Number of Persons Injured	Estimated Damage Property	Estimated Damage Crops	Character of Storm
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MICHIGAN, East

MIZ047>049-053>055- Midland - Bay - Huron - Saginaw - Tuscola - Sanilac - Shiawassee - Genesee - Lapeer - St. Clair - Livingston - Oakland -
060>063-068>070-075>076 Macomb - Washtenaw - Wayne

30	0800EST	0	0			Winter Storm
31	1300EST					

MIZ075>076-082>083 Washtenaw - Wayne - Lenawee - Monroe

30	2000EST	0	2	820K		Ice Storm
31	2300EST					

The prolonged period of winter weather across southeast Michigan from January 30th to February 1st was the result of a series of low pressure systems that developed in Texas and moved northeastward along an arctic frontal boundary. During the morning of the 30th, the arctic front extended from central Texas to the southern Ohio River valley. A narrow band of heavy snow, associated with the frontal boundary, fell along the I-94 corridor from Ann Arbor to Detroit from the morning of the 30th through the early evening hours. The snowfall diminished during the early evening hours of the 30th. However, a low pressure system moved northeast along the arctic frontal boundary that same evening and moved into central Indiana and northern Ohio by the morning of the 31st. This system allowed precipitation to quickly develop across southeast Michigan late in the evening on the 30th. The precipitation began as snow, and then changed over to freezing rain south of I-96 as warm air moved over the colder air near the surface. The heaviest freezing rain fell along and south of a line from Ann Arbor to Detroit, with precipitation being mostly in the form of snow to the north. Precipitation gradually tapered to light freezing rain and freezing drizzle late in the morning of the 31st across all of southeast Michigan as the low moved east of the state.

Another low pressure system moved northeast along the frontal boundary during the evening of the 31st. This low pressure system traveled farther north and was thus associated with some warmer air. Freezing rain redeveloped during the evening of the 31st across all of southeast Michigan, and again was heaviest along and south of a Detroit to Ann Arbor line. The low pressure system strengthened as it moved into the southern Great Lakes early in the morning of February 1st. Thus enough warm air was moved northward to change the precipitation over to all rain shortly after midnight on the 1st. The strong low pressure system also caused high winds to develop later in the morning of the 1st (see February Storm Data for more details).

From the time the snowfall began on the morning of the 30th, until it changed over to freezing rain during the morning of the 31st, snowfall totals ranged from 7 to 11 inches across much of Wayne and Washtenaw counties, with as much as 12 inches reported in the cities of Ann Arbor and Dearborn Heights. After the snow had changed over to freezing rain, one quarter to one half of an inch of ice had accumulated onto trees and power lines by the evening of the 31st. Snowfall amounted to only 2 to 4 inches across Lenawee and Monroe counties before changing over to freezing rain. Around a half an inch of ice accumulated onto trees, power lines, and untreated surfaces by the afternoon of the 31st in these counties. The rest of southeast Michigan, mainly north of I-96, saw the heaviest precipitation fall in the form of snow. Snowfall amounts ranged from 5 to 9 inches across this area, with as much as 10 to 11 inches reported around Flint, Owosso, and Lapeer.

Most of the damage from this prolonged winter storm occurred in Washtenaw, Wayne, Lenawee, and Monroe counties due to the higher accumulations of ice. The weight of the snow and ice on trees caused hundreds of tree limbs to break and even uprooted a few large trees. This did damage to dozens of homes and automobiles. The weight of the snow and ice led to the collapse of the roof at Checker's Sav-more Drugs in Westland. Only two people were in the store at the time, and both escaped uninjured. In Salem Township, the metal roof of the Gardner Wescott manufacturing plant also caved in due to the weight of the snow and ice. Noone was inside the plant at the time of the collapse. A girl (age unknown) was struck by a falling tree branch in Detroit and sent to the hospital with minor head injuries. A woman in Ypsilanti was also injured when a tree limb fell and broke her leg. The accumulation of snow and ice on the roads and highways led to dozens of accidents across southeast Michigan. Flooded roadways also led to traffic problems across portions of metro Detroit as storm drains became blocked with snow and ice. At least 5 fatal traffic accidents occurred across southeast Michigan during the two days of winter weather. A man died in Saginaw's Taymouth Township when his pickup truck slid into a creek. Another fatality occurred in Macomb's Shelby Township when a woman and her vehicle spun out of control and hit a pickup truck. One woman was struck and killed when she stepped out of her car to assist a troubled motorist in Washtenaw county. A man in Monroe county was also struck and killed when he stepped out of his disabled car on US-23. At least one other fatal traffic accident also occurred during this storm. Several people were also treated for heart attacks after shoveling heavy snow. Falling tree branches and the weight of the ice downed hundreds of power lines and left an estimated 290 thousand residents and businesses without power, some of which had to wait several days for power to be restored. Most of the power outages occurred in the metro Detroit area, as well as across Washtenaw, Lenawee, and Monroe counties. The heavy snowfall was enough to prompt dozens of communities in the metro Detroit area to declare snow emergencies, and closed almost all school districts.